

HOUSE RESOLUTION 20

By Shaw

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Charles Allen Rawls of Brownsville and commend his lifetime achievements.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the General Assembly honor the memory of those inimitable individuals whose capable leadership and unflagging dedication defined them as exemplary members of their respective communities both in their professional and their personal lives; and

WHEREAS, greater economic independence and success for minority Americans will best be achieved through increased opportunities for private employment and business ownership; creativity, character, and individual initiative ultimately determines the success or failure of those who venture into the business world; and

WHEREAS, Brownsville entrepreneur and humanitarian, Charles Allen Rawls, was one such distinguished individual who, during his lifetime, overcame many obstacles and accomplished great success; his diligence, generosity, and professional conduct served as testimony to those very qualities which define great men; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Rawls's unprecedented commitment, professionalism, and competence in all his endeavors will continue to serve as a benchmark for current and future citizens; he gave unselfishly of himself, his time, and his remarkable talents to perpetuate the public good, especially in the interest of supporting Black business owners in his local community; and

WHEREAS, born January 25, 1905, Mr. Rawls was one of eleven children left in the care of his mother after his father's early death; ever industrious, he milked cows for a salary of 50 cents per week while still in high school; and

WHEREAS, during his lifetime, Mr. Rawls demonstrated his determination to achieve his dreams of building a strong, active, and thriving business; and

WHEREAS, graduating with honors from Gupton Jones College of Mortuary Science in Nashville at the age of 24, Mr. Rawls later established the Rawls Funeral Home at 201 North Bradford Street; the next year he founded the Rawls Mutual Benefit Burial Association, which would see a peak of 50,000 members only six years later; and

WHEREAS, in 1940, Mr. Rawls established the Service Sundry Drug Store, employing the first Black pharmacist in the county; in the interest of providing entertainment facilities for local members of the Black community, he also began operating the first Black movie house, the Gem Theater; and

WHEREAS, committed to a life of faithful service to the Lord, Mr. Rawls participated in the organization of the Sons and Daughters of the Golden Circle at First Baptist Church on July 5, 1950; he was also active in the Tribes of Judea; and

WHEREAS, in 1958, he established the Golden Circle Life Insurance Company, which operated in Brownsville, Memphis, Nashville, and Knoxville; under his tutelage, the company evolved into what is now ranked as one of the top 100 Black-owned companies in the United States; and

WHEREAS, in the year before his death, Mr. Rawls was appointed to the Board of Directors of the Brownsville Bank and was designated a Paul Harris Fellow of Rotary International for his contributions to the organization; and

WHEREAS, as a result of his accomplishments before his death on February 7, 1987, Mr. Rawls earned the unbridled respect and admiration of his peers and the people of greater Tennessee. He was renowned as an advocate and crusader for ethical, concerned business practices and for the needs and concerns of all Tennesseans; and

WHEREAS, the Charles Allen Rawls Legacy Award has been established, and is presented to those businesses who exemplify a high level of principles and success in remembrance of Charles Allen Rawls's own dedication, service, and accomplishments; and

WHEREAS, due to Mr. Rawls's honorable and meritorious service, Brownsville, and the whole of West Tennessee is undoubtedly a better place to live and work, and it is highly appropriate that the friends, colleagues, and family of this outstanding public servant should

honor and recognize his numerous accomplishments and contributions to our great State; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, that, in the year of his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, we remember and honor the memory of Charles Allen Rawls, and we affirm that he leaves behind a legacy paralleled by few; his actions as a principled and dedicated community leader have made an indelible mark upon the people of this great State and will undoubtedly serve as a model for many years to come.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.